

Supply—Transport

commission report and reached a conclusion in that regard. But in the meantime these operators are faced with this continuing and growing dilemma. If we have, as most of us do have, a real concern about the question of Canadian content of broadcasting, it will be seen at once just how serious this is. If an operator should perhaps be compelled by economic threats from rivals to operate cablevision service and to abandon or curtail his existing television service, let alone extend it, keeping in mind that on a cablevision service the great bulk of programming will be from the United States, one can see the serious problem which faces not just the operators but Canada as a whole.

What I am saying is that there is an urgent necessity for the earliest possible action on this matter. The earliest possible decision on broadcasting policy must be made. In addition, in my view the earliest decision possible should be made to accept one very fundamental recommendation of the Fowler commission report, and that is that cablevision should be placed on all fours with broadcasting in so far as the control of its content is concerned, bringing this under the broadcasting regulations. I do not think I have to elaborate on the view I have arrived at after considering all the implications of the situation I have outlined.

In this connection I want only to refer to the Prime Minister's undertaking given as a result of a question I asked as recorded at page 37 of *Hansard* for Thursday, January 20, 1966. At the top of page 38 the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, I think I can give my hon. friends the assurance that parliament will have a chance to consider broadcasting before a final decision is taken.

I know the Prime Minister is not a man who says a thing which will have an implication he does not intend. The obvious implication of those words is that the government in making a decision on broadcasting policy will place the matter, perhaps by way of a report, before this house so that the house will have a chance to pass opinions and suggest amendments or modifications before action is taken that will fundamentally alter or commit the country to a new policy.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I would not like to quibble with the hon. gentleman, and I do not think he will think that I am, but I am sure he will agree that the Prime Minister's statement does not preclude the government from making decisions on one or two

isolated aspects of the matter that may prove to be of great urgency, without necessarily bringing the whole policy in at once. I would like to enter that caveat so there will not be a suggestion of bad faith.

Mr. Fulton: Of course this must be a matter of good faith. I think I have correctly stated a reasonable interpretation of the Prime Minister's words. The government must take responsibility for decisions made from day to day to deal with situations as they arise. I believe the government will find that we will be reasonable about this. I was talking about broadcasting policy generally which would commit the country to far-reaching decisions which could not be revoked, and things that might happen which could not be changed before parliament has had an opportunity to consider the whole question.

Mr. Pickersgill: With the reservation I have made I completely agree with the hon. gentleman's interpretation.

Mr. Fulton: I am glad that we are in agreement on that. I hope the minister will agree that I am not overstating the case when I say there is the greatest necessity for an early decision, for the reasons I have given and for many others that might be advanced.

The third matter I want to discuss on this general item is the problem in connection with the pension of employees of the Canadian National Railways, for which the minister reports in this house. These railway employees throughout the country share a problem which this government has almost deliberately created. I refer to the difficulty confronting employers and employees as they attempt to adjust their existing pension plans to the situation created by the adoption of the new Canada Pension Plan. I think the government is open to the very harshest condemnation for the careless way in which it has dumped this problem in the laps of the country, of employers and employees alike.

The government has said: Here is the Canada Pension Plan; take it and deal with it; do what you can with it; we are going to enact it and push it off on you before we give you any opportunity to iron out any of the important details in respect of the difficult problems now confronting you in relation to existing plans. C.N.R. employees, among many others, are experiencing this difficulty now, and there is going to be a chaotic situation arise in the field of labour relations, in so far as this matter is one of negotiation.